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SUBJECT: DON'T NEGLECT DARFUR'S ARABS, WARNS CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVIST

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Darfur's Arab tribes must be included in the peace process if a lasting solution to the Darfur conflict is to be found, Darfuri civil society activist Hamid Nur told polchief in a meeting on January 12. Noting that Arab tribes feel left out of the Doha process, he urged that the USG support initiatives to promote grassroots dialogue and reconciliation. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On January 12, polchief met with Hamid Nur, former US Embassy Khartoum Political Assistant and newly appointed Executive Director of Governance Bureau, a consultancy focused on democracy and governance. (Note: Governance Bureau was founded by Waleed Madibbo Mousa, a prominent Darfur Reizegat Arab Intellectual known for organizing a successful intertribal equestrian festival in Ed Daien, South Darfur in July 2008. End Note.)

¶3. (SBU) Nur asserted that the existing United Nations/African Union-led attempts at peacemaking in Darfur are not inclusive and will therefore remain wholly insufficient. Joint Chief Mediator Djibril Bassole's attempts to create a civil society forum in Doha have failed, he said, due to an opaque selection process for representatives and perceived government interference. According to Nur, if real reconciliation is going to occur, it must happen not in Qatar but on the ground in Darfur.

¶4. (SBU) Nur proposed convening a forum of tribal leaders from all factions to promote intertribal unity and organic solutions to the Darfur crisis in order to rebuild the torn social fabric. He gave particular significance to the inclusion of Darfur's Arab tribes, who have, he claimed, recently come to the realization that they were manipulated by the Government during the years of conflict. Noting that Arab tribes represent a silent majority in Darfur, he believes they must be integrated into the peace process, and urged USG support for initiatives to promote grassroots dialogue and reconciliation.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The Doha peace process has neglected the Arab tribes, many of whom feel that if the rebels and the government achieve peace, it will come at their expense. However, with restive Arab tribesmen responsible for much of the banditry, kidnapping and other criminality plaguing Darfur, any viable political solution must include the Arab tribes. Moreover, plans for sustainable development in Darfur must consider not only the needs of settled peoples, but also the needs of the nomadic Arab tribes. End Comment.

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